



Big business

The inaugural SRHB (short range, heavy bullet) day was not just proof that big calibres can safely be shot at Bisley – it was well-attended, too

The NRA has been very active in recent years in welcoming users of a range of rifles that traditionally would not have been seen at Bisley. The growth in civilian service rifle and in target shotgun are but two examples of the new thinking at the NRA in opening its doors to accommodate all shooters.

Unfortunately, the 7,000J muzzle energy limit at Bisley has for many years meant that classic English sporting cartridges, such as the .500 Jeffery, the .505 Gibbs and the 600 Nitro Express, could not be used at Bisley.

At the start of this year, the NRA carried out various tests on Butt Zero using large calibre rifles. A series of ricochet screens were erected to confirm that bullets from these rifles remain safely lodged in the stop butt

without ricochet. Also, the poor ballistic performance of these rifles, where anything over 100 yards is a long shot, means that rounds will be safely contained in the range danger area by observing the 70mil rule.

From this testing, the concept of the short-range, heavy bullet (or “SRHB”) rifle was developed for shooting at Bisley. An SRHB rifle is one that has a muzzle energy not exceeding 14,000 Joules, a muzzle velocity not exceeding 800m/s and a bullet weight of not less than 400 grains.

Friday 13 April saw a dozen shooters assemble at the Pavilion for the inaugural SRHB shoot. After a cheerful early-morning welcome from the NRA’s events team, Rick Wells provided a short safety briefing and then it was off to Butt Zero.

The British Sporting Rifle Club kindly agreed to allow us to use their standing shooting bench, and the NRA set up a couple of gazebos in case the weather turned bad, which fortunately it did not. A standing shooting bench is very useful when using these rifles. They were traditionally shot from the standing position, and an elevated bench provides a supported shooting position useful for testing accuracy. The recoil of these rifles means that prone shooting is not a practical option.

We were joined on the range by David Miles of Rigby & Co, who brought one of their .416 rifles together with a quantity of their safari-grade ammunition. This enabled shooters both to try Rigby ammunition in their rifles and to try a Rigby rifle chambered in .416. I would like to record my

thanks to Rigby for their generous support of the SRHB shoot.

We used the 900-yard firing point, with targets set in Butt Zero, giving an effective distance of about 75 yards. The first step was to check that the shots from the rifles would fall into the sand at that distance. Our range officers, Rick Wells and Clive Rew, went through this process smoothly and effectively and we were all soon on to the main morning of shooting. Shooters

took it in turns to shoot from the standing shooting bench or from a rifle rest fitted to a sturdy tripod. Turnover was quick, as four rounds at a time is usually enough before turning over the firing point to the next shooter.

There was a variety of rifles on the firing point through the morning, including a 9.3x64 Brenneke, .416 Rigby, .500 Jeffery, .505 Gibbs, .500/416 and a .600 NE – some in bolt action, others in double rifles.

You might ask why people would want to shoot these rifles. The noise they produce is considerable, as is the recoil. But there is an undeniable attraction to the history that these rifles represent. To use one of these rifles is to take a step back in time and share an experience common to the

four rounds, and of course the double rifles hold only two rounds, the event provides plenty of practice in reloading. The event is scored by the scoring value of each shot, with no adjustment for time. If a shot is fired after the end of the 35 seconds, the highest scoring shot on the target is ignored. It is a challenging

exercise in balancing speed with accuracy, with six well-aimed shots easily able to beat eight poorly-aimed shots.

With the competition over and

the light beginning to fade, it was back to the Pavilion for coffee and more talk of rifles and shooting.

The day not only provided immense fun for all who attended but also provided further evidence that cartridges in excess of 7,000J can be used safely at Bisley.

The next SRHB Day is scheduled for Friday 17 August. Anybody who has one of these rifles is invited to register their interest with Rick Wells at the NRA. ■

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great explorers of the Victorian and Georgian eras.

At lunchtime we gathered at the Army Target Shooting Club for a generous lunch and then it was back to the range for an afternoon of snap shooting.

There are various categories of snap shooting competition for these rifles but for this event we used the “eight shots in 35 seconds” version that is used in international competition. Since even magazine rifles will hold only three or



Double the fun: It was more than just bolt-actions on display